



## Site 300's Vanishing Population

In 1960 three nationally known botanists appealed to Dr. Edward Teller, then director of the Laboratory, for permission to enter Site 300 on an errand of mercy.

Clinging to a hillside in Corral Hollow was the last surviving population of a little orange wildflower known as *Amsinckia Grandiflora*.

Presumed extinct, *A. grandiflora* was rediscovered in Corral Hollow in 1938. Specimens collected in 1952 had died without producing seeds. Botanists now hoped to perpetuate the species in the UC Botanical Garden.

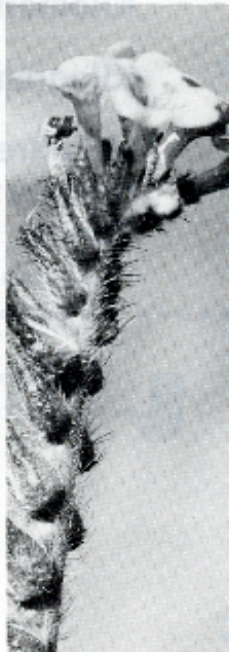
Hopes blossomed—but the plants didn't! A third unfortunate attempt was made in 1967.

On what may have been the final mission, botanists revisited the ailing colony April 25 and issued a dismal prognosis. Heading up the team was UC's Robert Ornduff who said the number of plants had greatly diminished since his visit in 1967, and he feared another winter of harsh rains would wipe out the small population.

Ornduff is a Professor of Botany and director of the UC Botanical Garden. The group also included L.R. Heckard, curator of Berkeley's Jepson Herbarium which houses a collection of native plants; Dan Cheatham, administrator of UC's land and water natural resources, and graduate student Stephen Weller who specializes in population biology of flowering plants.

Site 300 Superintendent Roy Mullins escorted the group, "to see this thing I've heard about for so many years." And he brought back a specimen to preserve in plastic "just in case."

The unprolific annual is cast in a recurring drama that threatens to end in despair. While scientists ponder the genetics problem afflicting the plants, the small colony in Corral Hollow dwindles every year.



[Top] L.R. Heckard examines ailing specimen, while Dan Cheatham pursues his hobby of flower photo graphy. [Center] Robert Ornduff, Roy Mullins and Stephen Weller discuss the unhappy findings. [Bottom] Cheatham moves in for close up of *A. grandiflora*, and Ornduff continues his search.